PARENTING EDUCATION FOR THE YOUNG: A LITERATURE SURVEY

PEARL KARAL, Principal Investigator

This research project was funded under contract by the Ministry of Education, Ontario. It reflects the views of the author and not necessarily those of the Ministry.

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Ministry of Education
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Ministry of Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

This study, commissioned by the Ministry of Education of Ontario, had a twofold purpose: (1) to determine the need for parenting education for children up to nineteen years, and (2) to find out what is being done worldwide in this field. The study was carried out during the summer of 1983.

The data consist of the following: the results of computer searches of the literature; responses from seventeen countries, twenty-two American states and nine Canadian provinces to a set of questions; curriculum materials from almost all the above; reports on international conferences on family life education held in Europe, Africa, and Asia; and the results of telephone interviews—sixty-six sources in all.

A concern for and interest in the provision of parenting and other family life education were reflected in the volume of material received and the content of the communications. All respondents look to education to ameliorate the impact of technological and social forces battering the family.

The contents of the different educational programs vary according to their goals, length, and depth. The most inclusive programs contain information about the following: human development in the physical, social, intellectual, and values areas; family structures, roles, and dynamics; the physical, intellectual, and emotional nurturance of the young; awareness, differentiation, and integration of the self; interpersonal and decision-making skills; and, for programs covering the lifespan, the roles, lifestyles, and values of adults.

Sex education is a major focus in many areas, compulsory in some places, optional in some, and unheard of in others. Research indicated a very low level of factual knowledge among adolescents, concurrent with an increasing rate of early sexual behaviour.

The principles underlying the assignment of specific content to age and grade are discussed in this study. Single-course programs are generally given to children sixteen to eighteen years of age, with the sexes separated. Attitude formation begins in Kindergarten; information is presented at all ages.

Only sixteen of the sixty-six locations surveyed provide education in parenting for handicapped children and for normal children in the parenting of handicapped children.

There are a number of excellent programs that have a general application and for which supportive material is available in all media. Community professionals contribute their expertise to programs on an occasional basis.

Community organizations provide some courses but are generally overburdened with remediation. They provide a "second chance" at such education for young people.

New directions in the field include the provision to students of direct, supervised contacts with young children.

Research occurs mostly within the schools and is directed at learner outcomes. The findings of studies of students', ex-students', teachers and parents' responses to programs are highly positive. Recommendations are made in this report for research.

The writer concluded that short courses on parenting skills are a necessary but not sufficient step towards meeting the goal of bolstering family stability. The attitudes and personality characteristics required to put information, obtained from "crash" courses, into practice are best inculcated early in life.

Introduction

This study was commissioned by the Ministry of Education of the Province of Ontario to be completed over the summer of 1983. The study had a twofold purpose: (1) to determine the need for parenting education and (2) to find out what is being done in the area of parenting education around the world. The time allotted for the study was four to five months.

The specific questions that this study addressed appear in appendix A. Information was to be gathered primarily by means of a literature search. Educational materials from the Ontario school system are not considered here, since they form part of a parallel project.

Data Collection

Data were collected in the following ways:

1) A computer search of the literature was conducted, for which the ERIC, IDRC, SPIF, and Sociological Abstracts data bases were used. The descriptors employed were mostly those that combined "parent", "family", and "child", in conjunction with "education". A list of specific descriptors is given in appendix B.

2) Letters were sent to:
   a) the ministries of education of fifty countries;
   b) the ministries of education of all the American states;
   c) those education-research institutions listed in UNESCO publications that indicated an active interest in evaluative research on curricula;
   d) international organizations such as the World Federation of Teachers and Planned Parenthood;
   e) workers' educational associations in twenty-five countries.

The letter sent to solicit information is reproduced in appendix C.

3. Personal telephone calls were made to the information officers of a selected number of national ministries of education.

4. Telephone interviews were conducted with a number of Canadian national and local agencies and institutes, privately-funded community organizations, and religious authorities.

5. Telephone inquiries were made with several American federal research and development agencies.

6. Telephone and written communication was entered into with the department heads of a number of universities that have a family life department.

7. Verbal and written reports were requested from professionals recently returned from visits to other countries. A list of the countries and the American states that responded to the study appear in appendix D.

Definition of the Field

There are nineteen descriptors used in the computer literature in conjunction with "education". Some contain the word "family", for example, family life, studies, planning. Some focus on the word "parent", for example, parenting, parenthood, parentcraft, responsible parenting, preparation for parenthood. The former group emphasizes the social unit; the latter, the adult or near-adult. Many descriptors point to the child, for example, child development, care, management and guidance. Still other descriptors are more general, subsuming the various topics under such terms as "human ecology", "biology", "population", "religion", or "civics". "Pedagogy" is another descriptor used for the field. This use originated in central Europe after World War II, when there was a shortage of teachers. To compensate for this shortage, educators sought to assist students to become aware of both the teaching process and their own learning processes. The educators believed that such awareness would help to prepare the students to learn about life generally. Thus the term "pedagogy" came to signify preparation for life, of which preparation for parenthood is a significant segment.

The most frequently and widely used heading for this field is, however, "family life education" (FLE). This heading contains the three major terms that make up the field: family, life, and education. "FLE" was therefore used in this study as the most general descriptor, to provide entry into the literature and to cast the widest possible net to elicit information from respondents.

Attempts to differentiate among several of the most common terms have been made. Houde, for example, offers a definition of parenthood as a "widened perception of self accompanied by an increase in altruism, whereas parenting implies the learning, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which influence the development and functioning of a child." The literature does not support any discriminative consistency in usage. Many teachers throughout the world would find the juxtaposition of "parent" with "education"

meaningless, according to one educator, Dixon of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, who has broached this subject to teachers in many countries. Parenthood is regarded as a state, not a field of study. The neologism, "parenting" was unknown to those teachers.

A typical, well-considered definition is stated in a report compiled by the Kansas Department of Education in 1981:

> [FLE] is an educational process which involves development of positive caring attitudes toward self and others, interpersonal skills, and the factual knowledge necessary to make responsible decisions. It encompasses the ability to nurture the development of the young and to be sensitive to the evolving changes and demands in adolescents, early adulthood and advancing years.

Another representative definition is Whitfield's, also in 1981:

> ... those experiences incorporated in the education and training of young people which are relevant to the aim of helping them to become self-aware and to form stable relationships, so that in due course they may consider responsibly the possibilities of marriage, skilled parenthood, and a fulfilled family life.

The New Jersey Administrative Code specifies FLE as follows:

> ... Family life education program means instruction to develop an understanding of the physical, mental, emotional, social, economic, and physiological, psychological and cultural foundations of human development, sexuality, and reproduction, at various stages of growth; the opportunity for pupils to acquire knowledge which will support the development of responsible behaviour, strengthen their own family life now, and aid in establishing strong family life for themselves in the future thereby contributing to the enrichment of the community.

A number of writers struggle with the problem of defining the field. The topics that occur most frequently in their definitions include child care; the physical, social, and emotional development of

children and adolescents; and roles and interrelationships among family members.

Additional subtopics that are considered by some to be components of FLE include such diverse subjects as marriage enrichment, values clarification, respect for and understanding of parents, sensitivity training, and assertiveness training. Programs given under home economics departments widen the concept of family life to include money management, home management, and the aesthetics of the home as a family environment.

Hicks and Williams conclude that an inclusive definition of such education has yet to be reached by educators who are attempting to meet the needs of parents or parents-to-be through programming efforts. They see the diversity of definitions as a reflection of variation in goals and methods as well as in content. Since the goals themselves are, on consideration, entwined with values, the differences in values held by the definer must also affect the definitions.

There are other explanations offered for the diversities among definitions. Gaylin attributes these diversities to the interdisciplinary nature of FLE. But definitions may vary in part according to the mandates of various volunteer and social agencies. The particular areas of skill possessed by the various professional disciplines tend to direct those agencies towards the provision of those types of services and education that are highly developed in the particular professions. For example, articles by members of social agencies tend to emphasize communication skills and role analysis, whereas public health nurses tend to emphasize nutrition, safety, and health care of both mother and child pre- and post-natally. These skills form starting points for contact. As the professionals become more experienced, they broaden their scope to include other subtopics in which they feel competent and that seem to them to be appropriate.

Fisher and Kerckhoff take the approach that FLE is a profession that has been split into too many subspecializations. They cite one agency's list of forty-two "objectives" for FLE; these

objectives represent a mélange of subject areas; for example, "promoting physical and mental health, democratic family life, to understand the personality of self and others". Each such topic can be viewed as a subarea, "ensuring the 'variety of approaches that fulfill better the multivarious perspectives of American life styles'". Alternatively (and equally politically), the multiplicity of subareas can be viewed as reflecting a "typically American illusion of choice" (Pollack).

Implicit in the selection of subareas for inclusion and exclusion are a number of statements. The line of reasoning seems to be as follows:

1. Society as we know and value it is breaking down. Articles frequently begin, therefore, with statistics on social ills such as divorce, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, and working mothers. These phenomena are seen to be due, at least in part, to family breakdown both in structure and function.

2. The traditional family and religious institutions can no longer be counted on to prepare the young adequately to cope with stresses that exist throughout the world. Therefore, as a preventive measure, the institution of formal education must share in rearing the young. This is the most frequent theme in the literature and communications from every country that responded to this study.

3. Certain values (which vary according to the definitions of FLE) should be inculcated in children to support their future serious consideration of childbearing and establishing a family. Such inculcation is required so that those children will in future be motivated to devote their time, effort, and thought to family life.

4. Certain kinds of skills that are believed to be required to raise children "well" (which, again, vary according to the definitions) should be included in the FLE program. These skills include communication, discipline or "guidance" techniques, physical care,

provision for play and intellectual stimulation, and interpersonal skills. The goal behind skills transmission is seen to be the development of confidence and competence in decision making and parenting. The assumption is that those who have such skills will be more likely to put them into practice when they become parents.

5. The more recent the reference, the more likely it is that personality characteristics will be included in the definitions. A strong and positive sense of self is mentioned often in more recent definitions. The reasoning seems to be that mature, mentally healthy parents tend to raise mature, mentally healthy children. Such parents also tend to make better use of their knowledge of skills and principles. Thus, assisting in the development of a strongly positive self-concept is included as a precondition to the teaching of the skills listed. Self-awareness and confidence are treated similarly (see Whitfield).

6. Less frequently included is the goal of attaining a satisfying marital relationship. The premise of this goal, again, is that partners in a fulfilling relationship tend to be more motivated than other parents to invest themselves intensively and effectively in childrearing.

7. The most recent development of all in FLE is the inclusion of the life-span concept. Values are extended to include self-development and self-fulfillment, so that childbearing and rearing constitute one major segment of education for the whole of life. Such definitions may include aesthetics, ethics, and preparation for death—all as part of life.

Several writers have opted for operational definitions: FLE is what FL educators teach. Stern took this approach in 1960. Kerckhoff and Habig arranged to have forty-four secondary school teachers who taught topics under the heading of "parent education" interviewed. The list of topics taught by these teachers led them to conclude that what was widely termed "parent education" was often an aspect of traditional FLE. The definitional process comes full circle.

The difficulty of defining the field seems to have made some writers unwilling to commit themselves to a title, much less a definition. Schleicher, in his report for the Council for Cultural Cooperation, tried to take a neutral stance by constantly using quotation marks around the expression "preparation for parenthood".

The Ghanaian conference on teachers and FLE stated: "FLE has no precise definition, and perhaps need not have. In one sense, it may be best to describe what it is not. FLE is not a new curriculum, an added subject, on the restructuring of education. It begins with what teachers teach today in every classroom in any country and takes into consideration what the child learns in and outside the school."

Many of the descriptor terms are used interchangeably. This leads to some confusion on occasion, as was evident from many of the initial responses obtained during telephone contacts. For example, many respondents assumed that parent education is directed only to those who are or are about to become parents. The invention of neologisms like "parenting" and "parenthood" leads to further confusions. Does the former refer to process only, and the latter to a state, as Houde's definition implied? Similarly, does "family life" refer to life in one's family of origin, of generation, or both?

Those who take an ecological view regard FLE as "an identifiable specialty within the behavioural sciences" (Gaylin; Garbarino and Stocking). There are those who believe that much of the content is best presented in the context of other subject areas—specifically as parts of physiology, physical and health education, nutrition, and so on—and not as a subject on its own. This approach becomes apparent on a scrutiny of the many course curricula and in statements made regarding the selection of personnel qualified to teach such subjects.

Some terms have taken on negative connotations for historic or other reasons. Whitfield claims that in Canada FLE has to some extent become "tainted" with the connotation of sex education. (It is interesting to note in this context that the board of education of one

American state noted for its university's courses in family life and child development sent along its curriculum for sex education, despite extensive telephone discussions of the project.) Such a connotation was not evident in the case of most of the other respondents, of curricula, or of the definitions employed in social agencies.

Other negative correlations made were between education for parenthood and planned parenthood, negative in the sense that writers in the first area were careful to detach their field from an association with sex education.

Some religious institutions are defining FLE in a restricted sense—that is, as the enrichment of family religious observances (Sawin). (This is particularly interesting in view of the fact that many objectors to FLE's being taught in the schools believe it should be part of religious education.)

The information obtained from Poland reinforces the conclusions drawn from the literature and the course curricula: "Parenting education meant different things to different people, depending on their personal or professional biases. [Such education] was seen as a continuum, a process from early childhood, often non apparent, using contacts of all kinds, to make and improve parenting skills. For example, every time the mother and child see a health professional, that is or could be parenting education. Parenting education should be in the mind of the school nurse, family doctor, teacher, etc."

Definitions vary, then, in scope, ranging from a global orientation in which the all-inclusive subject is life education, covering every possible academic subject save, perhaps, the physical sciences, to a specific orientation, for example, to those cognitive and practical skills needed to consider bearing and rearing of children.

A very practical response to the dilemma of definition of the field has been to propose dimensions that identify and categorize those

subcomponents deemed to be relevant. Two such dimensions in common use are objective and focus (see Fisher and Kerckhoff). Thus, the problems of setting definite limits to the field do not hamper program development.

On a theoretical level, the problem of the definition of FLE should not be a matter for arbitrary decision about the use of component terms. If the goal of a program is the education of students for a mature, productive, and fulfilling life (and death), then the title of the course should not be "Family Life". The term education thus takes on all the connotations of childrearing that have traditionally been regarded as a primary function of the family, not of formal education.

The production of appropriate definition(s) will result from a more stringent analysis of the FLE segment of the educational enterprise.

Core Curriculum

Identification of the core curriculum of FLE requires prior consideration of FLE's goals. These goals can be divided into three main groups, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Goals of Courses

	Included in Program	Not Included	Unclear
Personal			
- personality development	50	6	10
- improved self-confidence/ esteem	42	8	16
- character development	51	5	10
Skill Acquisition			
- home and child management	51	11	4
- practical experience	15	51	-
- interpersonal relations (communication, conflict resolution)	60	5	1
- decision making	45	9	12
Knowledge Acquisition			
- child development	49	10	7
- life cycle	6	60	-
- sex education	35	16	15
			N=66

All programs are considered to be based on knowledge and concept acquisition. The primary concept is the concept of human development, with the concepts of family and responsibility following directly in importance. The breadth and length of the overall program determine what range of development is covered. Some programs cover the span from birth to adolescence or young adulthood; others cover the entire life span. The facts about development, together with the concept of development, form the structural base of any program.

The next major goal after knowledge is skill acquisition. In this area, values and emotional needs are often included under decision making and interpersonal relations. Home and child management generally include nutrition, safety, and provision for activities. Child guidance and discipline are always included as part of management, often in conjunction with considerations of parental decision making.

Personal-development goals find expression in a wide variety of approaches and content, reflecting varying levels of originality and suggesting differing degrees of psychological sophistication. (This has been discussed in the previous section.)

The practical-experience component is not yet part of the core in application, although it certainly is in terms of frequency of inclusion as a vital component.

The main subject areas are divided in many ways, again depending on the depth and breadth of the program. There has probably been considerable borrowing and interchange of programmatic material (viz., New Zealand's use of an American program). The similarities among programs in basic areas is unmistakeable. The variations are largely in the specificity or embeddedness of the components and the detail and depth with which the material is covered.

In sum, the core components of an extensive FLE curriculum are most likely to include studies of child development in the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and values areas; family

structure, roles, and dynamics; physical, intellectual, and emotional nurturance; self-awareness, differentiation, and integration; interpersonal and decision-making skills; and the roles, lifestyles, goals, and values of adults.

Sex Education and FLE

Sex education is considered here to be one basic segment of FLE.

All the statistics quoted in the literature from every country indicate that progressively more adolescents are sexually active, and at progressively younger ages. This fact challenges the moral standards of all cultures. The rising number of illegitimate births and single-parent families has become a destabilizing force in family life. Education is widely regarded as the chief hope for halting and reversing this trend. The hope is that formal education, in the form of short-term educational intervention, will somehow motivate young people to desist from personally and socially destructive sexual behaviour. There are no firm research results to support this.

Planned parenthood federations in many countries have worked for many years to convince governments to offer family-planning services and education. The International Planned Parenthood Federation considers the "battle largely won" since "a majority of governments in the world today are directly or indirectly involved in the provision of family services". Their concept of such services is not identical with FLE, although in some places some FLE has been added. Many non-governmental organizations, especially social agencies that have to deal directly with the severe problems caused by illegitimate births, have practical reasons for recognizing the contribution that the provision of simple factual knowledge can make. The situation described in the International Planned Parenthood publication (Stella) indicates what is happening in Asia, and it has a familiar ring in every country.

> In Asia, the family is still the strongest single influence for the majority of young people. However, the rush for industrialization and urbanization have weakened the influence of the family. There are indications that the cultural mechanisms for controlling the behaviour of young people are slowly weakening, if not disappearing altogether. For example in many urban areas in the developing world, such as those of India, young

> women attending schools or working in offices and factories find themselves constantly exposed to new influences without the supporting mechanisms of the family. As the age of marriage rises, and opportunities for a rewarding job become fewer, as contact with and exposure to the opposite sex gets more common, there is more likelihood of prolonged periods of pre-marital and teenage sexual activity which could lead to sexual intercourse and pregnancy. In most Asian societies, pre-marital pregnancy would most likely mean a rushed or forced marriage to the putative father. But the fact remains that physically, emotionally and socially teenage childbearing negatively affects the young people and society at large.... Adolescent sexuality is emerging as one of the most pressing contemporary challenges to family planners.

The challenge is not restricted to those concerned with family planning. It faces all those in the helping professions, all who see first-hand the impact on young lives, and it faces all teachers and educators, as well as parents.

There are three levels of contribution that education can make. The first is the provision of factual information about intercourse, conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. The statistics from every country that has tested the accuracy and extent of the knowledge possessed by teenagers indicate a very low level of knowledge, even in so-called sophisticated Western countries. All who are involved in the dissemination of factual information, however, recognize that such knowledge has a limited influence on behaviour.

Therefore, at the next level, concepts—the concept of responsibility, the concept of decision making as the basis of possible consequences to oneself and others—are provided. This is the rational level. The assumption underlying this approach is that the development of skills in the process of rational decision making in the school setting will result in similarly rational decision making in a highly emotional situation. This approach appears to come much closer to meeting the demands made in the general literature.

The third level of contribution that education can make involves attitude and character development. This would require

programs over the entire educational span. The titles of the various courses and the descriptions of their content might not at first glance indicate their direct relevance to FLE. For their most effective use, these courses would provide the student with the emotional, social, and cognitive bases that they would need at a later time.

Those schools or systems that provide only one course provide a short term of lectures on responsible parenting, and/or factual information. Such courses are targeted to sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds and are generally given to boys and girls separately. The "family" and "life" components of FLE cannot be dealt with in any depth in either of these approaches. It would be valuable to research both types of programs and to estimate on psychological grounds how well they communicate values and affect attitudes. There are tests available in one of the American programs to enable such research to be done.

Health professionals are typically brought in to teach the anatomy and physiology involved in FLE courses. Where these topics are subsumed under health or physical education, the provision of objective facts appears to be a simple matter. Yet this is the area of greatest teacher, parent, and societal discomfort. The general literature, the curriculum guides, and all the personal responses obtained in this study emphasize that something more is needed in the learning process than facts. That "something" is repeatedly described as "teacher comfort". This is discussed as well in terms of teacher selection. This expression implies that attitudes as well as facts are communicated, and discomfort about sex is not an attitude that most educators wish to communicate to adolescents.

The principle operating in the assignment of such courses to sixteen- to eighteen- or nineteen-year-olds is the principle of immediate relevance. According to all the social statistics, however, information given at this age comes too late to be maximally effective.

Even the most logically presented, well-documented programs, however, may fail to take into account the students' life and home

experiences and already crystallized attitudes. The motivations of society and educators are not seen by the adolescents to match their own motivations. One study asked secondary-level students what needs they felt FLE could fulfil. The results indicated clearly that the students structured their needs in terms of personal relationships and were interested in how they could improve the depth and quality of their intrafamilial and interpersonal relationships. Their concern was with sexuality as part of their self-concept rather than with sex per se.

In the writer's experience, the provision of factual information is helpful but not sufficient for adolescents; it is reaching them at a point when their trust in authority may be at a low level; in addition, many are less interested in rational decision making than in finding a place for themselves amongst their peers. Without previous and necessary education with a life perspective, it is unlikely that the students will be affected by such "crash" courses to the extent and in the ways that the proponents of such courses might wish.

Courses vary widely in breadth and specificity. Some, for example, describe the full range of human sexual behaviour, including homosexuality and deviations (e.g., those in Sweden); others simply state that such forms of behaviour exist.

It is sometimes difficult to determine from course titles just what is being taught and how it is being taught. Course headings such as "Religion and Ethics" and "Catholic Morality" (Spain) most likely include some references to sexual behaviour. Since content is determined at the discretion of local personnel in so many countries, the presence of a heading in the guidelines does not indicate whether physiology, sexual behaviour, or personal sexuality is discussed.

Sex education is also a political issue. It is compulsory in Denmark, Sweden, West Germany, Russia, and Israel and generally accepted and legal, though by no means universally provided, throughout France, Switzerland, and Italy. It is officially approved but not law

in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and non-existent in Turkey and Greece.

The similarity of programs, once factual, rational, and life-span approaches are taken into account, generally is impressive in spite of the fact that in some cases courses have their own identity and in others FLE is in embedded in other subject areas. When FLE is taken in by other subject areas, the approach is referred to several times in the literature as a "hidden curriculum". Déiseach goes so far as to describe many of the synonyms used for FLE in Canada as "euphemisms for sex education". "Interpersonal relations, human and social development, life skills, etc." are all seen as providing sex education "in a suitable context".

The general social concerns expressed in the literature extend beyond those problems which are regarded as the consequences of irresponsible sexual behaviour such as promiscuity. The literature makes it abundantly clear that FLE needs to be concerned with issues such as personal and family breakdown, and the consequences of inadequate parenting. Therefore, courses on interpersonal relations, life skills, and so on, are aimed at providing students with much more than a context for sex education. The thought and effort that went into so much of the programmatic material reflect this wider context. The reason that there is so much similarity in the basic structure of programs is because basic and universal human needs are being addressed. The issues involved in FLE extend far beyond sex education to character education and the inculcation of important human values.

Sex of Students and the Provision of FLE

Of the sixty-six sources of information for this study, sixteen clearly indicate that all courses are co-educational; five specify that courses are given separately to boys and girls; forty-five responses are unclear. The reason for this large "unclear" response are found among the student-selection forces at work. While the respondents indicate that the courses are open to both sexes, in fact few boys enrol. The largest enrolment of boys quoted is 16 per cent for one year; the typical enrolment where courses are optional is under 5 per cent.

One might say that there is sexual discrimination in the field, but this discrimination is not on the part of the designers and providers of FLE courses. Rather, it arises, as has been noted previously, from the course selections made by students themselves.

A number of the "unclear" responses resulted from the exercise by teachers of their discretionary power, an issue which is discussed elsewhere. For example, a teacher may decide that segments of a course are to be given to boys and girls separately, where there is no policy in force to determine such a division. This applies especially to so-called sensitive areas. Thus, the provision of courses to same- or mixed-sex groups is a variable that depends on factors other then policy decisions.

Many of the papers received specified equality of the sexes as a fundamental value which the authors believed should be inculcated in the young. This may, however, be a value held more firmly by curriculum designers and by philosophers of education than by the populations that their educational systems serve.

Relation of Course Content to Grade Levels

A number of pedagogical and psychological principles influence the ages at which various areas of content are introduced. However, the general distribution of courses in FLE is quite similar throughout the world in terms of age spread, at least in terms of the sample obtained here. The variations among the levels at which comparable subjects are taught depend to a certain extent on which principles are being followed. These principles include the following:

1. The content should be perceived by the students as having imminent relevance for them.

2. The content should be appropriately matched to the students' intellectual, social, or spiritual development and to their emotional maturity.

3. The content is best presented just before students become emotionally involved in a particular stage (e.g., sex education is provided before puberty).

4. The content should be presented at those ages at which attitudes and beliefs are formed chiefly on the basis of trust in adults, so that later teaching of information and principles will have a basis of support.

5. The content should be presented in the grades just prior to those after which students typically leave school. This constitutes the schools' "last chance" to provide specific courses so that the consideration of students' readiness is necessarily secondary to the practical one of student availability.

Table 2 shows the grade levels at which the various subtopics are typically given. Where the content is clearly recognizable, it is evident that there is considerable convergence as to level. When the information provided was less detailed, the assumption is made here that the level of complexity is scaled to age and grade levels. Thus,

for example, there is considerable repetition of the subject area "child development" across the grades, but the depth and complexity of its treatment would be adjusted to those ages and grades.

Most of the school respondents indicated that their programs are given over a span of years. This is one result of the choice of options that are offered at the Intermediate and Senior levels. Programs that do not require specific prerequisite training can be taken at several grade levels. Eighteen of the sixty-six respondents list FLE programs that cover the entire range from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Thirty-four list programs that cover Grades 7 to 11 or 12. The information from fourteen respondents is unclear, but judging from the course content, the appropriate ages would be at the Intermediate or Senior level.

For the out-of-school, community-based courses that formed part of the Exploring Childhood-Education for Parenthood program, mostly fourteen-year-olds enrolled in the first two years that the courses were presented. By the third to fifth years, the average ages of those enrolled decreased by at least one year. With self-selection as the criterion, and on the basis of a sample of over 6000 young Americans, the mean age level at which young people will enrol in community-based programs is thirteen to fourteen years. Thus, the need for such education seems to be experienced by students at the Grades 7 and 8 levels.

Table 2: Distribution of Topics by Grade Level

Grade Level	Subject Matter
Elementary	The family and family roles; self-awareness; the family in society; elementary social skills; elementary concept of development; elementary health, nutrition, and safety
Intermediate	Lifestyles and family options; relationships; child-development overview; conflict resolution and communication; nutrition; physiology
Secondary	Detailed child development; health: substance abuse; decision making related to heterosexual relations, parenting, and adulthood; sex and sexuality; values and goals

One of the major social problems that FLE is being expected to remediate is the increasing number of births to unwed teenage mothers. Accordingly, a number of projects are cited in the literature as examples of FLE's being offered to pregnant girls, as well as to girls considered to be at high risk. Many of these courses are given under the aegis of community and social agencies; and the age level of those enrolled covers the teen years. Such "crash" courses are given at the secondary age level on the principle of perceived immediacy of need, which has already been described. (Such perception may express the concern of the community more than that of the students.) The most typical content is in the general area of responsible parenthood.

Since the last year of compulsory education in several of the countries that reported is at the Grade 9 level, courses on responsible parenthood as well as on parenting are offered in that year. Another example of the assignment of courses on the principle of the availability of students is to be found in Finland, where military cadets are required to take FLE courses as part of their military

training. Such courses include the usual content of the "crash courses", that is, sex education and responsible parenthood, as well as parenting skills and family life, since the cadets are at an age and have a life style that make such knowledge directly applicable.

It should be noted that since the presentation of the various topics is at the discretion of the teacher, there is no certainty, in most instances, even in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 programs, that all the subject areas will be covered by any particular child in his/her school career.

The amount of time advocated for each course is a "recommended time", when it is even stated. There are many caveats—"where feasible", "if the timetable permits", "at the teacher's discretion"—so that the calculation of a mean time allotted to each subject area would not be meaningful. An example of such a time suggestion is one to two periods per week over an eight- to ten-week block.

Education for and About Handicapped Children

The education of students about children who are handicapped is an issue that is largely not addressed. Of the sixty-six respondents, thirty-two say nothing in their courses about the possibility that a child might be born with some handicap. Eighteen mention such a possibility, but do so under such headings as "Family Crises", or as part of a discussion of the genetic effects of substance abuse or dietary insufficiencies. There is no mention in these eighteen programs about how such children should be raised. Sixteen programs do include courses clearly designed to focus on raising children with special needs.

The outline of the state of Maine contains role-playing exercises so that children can learn what is like to look after a child who is, say, blind, and to bring home to them the effects of the handicap on both the family and the child. The outlines of Louisiana and California also have specific segments on such parenting.

There is no information in these data to indicate that programs in FLE are given in special schools for the handicapped. One respondent wrote "They get a good program in our special schools." Most respondents put dashes after that question number, which might suggest that they consider this question unrelated to the overall subject being investigated.

Public health and school nurses conduct programs, both inside and outside schools, in which they emphasize the importance of pre- and postnatal care for babies. There are also programs for pregnant teenagers, some conducted in residences operated by various agencies such as the Salvation Army, where possible damage to the child is discussed. Thus, the possibility of bearing a handicapped child is brought to the attention of some young people, but not of most.

Sweden is pioneering sex education for the mentally retarded. The focus is on normality within the limits of the ability of the retarded to assume responsibility for the consequences of their

decisions about sexual behaviour. One of the main goals of this program is to foster the self-esteem of retarded young people.

The data obtained lead to the conclusion that neither normal nor handicapped children are being adequately prepared for the exigencies of family life with a handicapped child. Perhaps the rationale for such omission is that discussion of this fact of life might worry or frighten young people having children themselves in the future. Perhaps there is a concern that the handicapped children in the schools might have unwanted attention drawn to them as a result of class discussion and that this might prove an added burden to them. However, this gap in the realistic preparation of young people for family life merits wider consideration.

Teacher Selection

This question elicited the most terse and acerbic replies, which seemed to indicate that this is a sensitive issue among teachers and administrators. One typical statement was "Our teachers are all certified under the State Board. We employ no unqualified teachers." Another response said "Only professional teachers teach these courses. Experts such as doctors and social workers are invited to lecture on their area of expertise only."

Such responses focus on qualifications to teach, and not on the possibility that this area might require special personal characteristics in addition to general teaching skills. The assumption seems to be that someone who is trained to teach can teach any subject matter. Thus the first principle for selection is simply accreditation as a teacher.

A middle-of-the-road position on teacher selection is taken by many educational authorities. Teachers who express an active interest in the field are often among those who have promoted the inclusion of FLE courses in the local schools, and they either offer to or are called on to teach such courses. The assumption here is that an intrinsic interest in the subject area will maximize the teacher's effectiveness. This would appear to be a very frequent basis for selection; it operates, in effect, on a second principle, that of self-selection.

A third criterion for teacher selection, used most frequently in the larger centres, is expertise in a field considered to be either directly or tangentially related, that is, in which some FLE content is already being taught under another subject area. Teachers with special training in home economics, physical and health education, biology, sociology, or even, on occasion, history, have extended their range into FLE course material.

"Vocational home economics" is the most common related area of specialization, since many FLE topics overlap such areas as nutrition, financial management, and infant and child care. The

impression gained from discussions with designers of home economics curricula is that many of these teachers regard FLE as a new and rewarding career direction. The quality and quantity of the curricula developed under the aegis of home economics provide supportive evidence for this.

Sex education is considered to be a logical extension of expertise in physical education, via the shared area of physical development. If health education is included in the label, the areas of nutrition and chemical abuse are often included as well.

A fourth criterion for teacher selection is specialization in FLE as a field on its own. Several North American universities are graduating people as FL educators. A handful of respondents mentioned having such specialists on staff or sharing their services with another school.

Specialists from other disciplines are mentioned as being co-opted to teach FLE courses in schools. A school social worker may provide such education to both children in the school and their parents; a school nurse may teach several subjects related to health and physiology, in addition to her more traditional services; a psychologist on the staff of a local board may provide short series of talks on mental health and intellectual and/or emotional development.

Lastly, there is the criterion of availability.* Teachers who have a marginal interest in the general area are pressed into service because of workload or timetable considerations. Here again, the assumption is made that a teacher trained to teach can teach anything.

This is in direct opposition to much of what is written in the general literature, which contains numerous references to the

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*There are several mentions of FLE programs being considered but rejected because no one was considered appropriate to teach them.

"special" characteristics that teachers of FLE should, ideally, possess. The characteristic most frequently mentioned is "sensitivity", and this is held to apply whether or not the content involves references to sexual behaviour. The teachers are to be sensitive to community norms and expectations, to the values and customs of the various religious and cultural groups in the community, to the pressures and expectations that the children face at home, and to the diverse lifestyles that provide influential models for those children. The teachers are also advised to recognize situations in which certain children are being adversely affected by specific content. The following excerpts provide examples of this point of view:

> The personal qualities of interest, commitment, tolerance, sensitivity to the individual needs of pupils, and awareness of the social, religious and ethnic realities of their backgrounds were felt to be of equal importance to the subject qualifications they already had ... and [some teachers] emphasized the need for them to have a socio-psychological background.
>
> Council of Europe, 1981 (Cowley)

> The best teachers of FLE are most often those who are familiar with growth and development patterns, understand the students they teach, and are comfortable with their own self and sexuality and with the variety of backgrounds in the community.
>
> Virginia curriculum guidelines

The Office of Child Development in Washington expressed the opinion that a FLE teacher required an understanding of group processes in order to provide a psychologically safe environment.

> The New Jersey guidelines state the following:
>
> While teachers [with other related specialization] may know and understand the subject matter necessary for this program, ... other personal traits are equally important. They should understand the students and be comfortable with their own sense of self and sexuality. The students should respect them and have confidence and trust in them. They should be able to meet the students on their level with frankness and honesty, and to discuss their concern objectively and

> nonjudgmentally.... [FLE teachers need] to possess certain empathic skills in living human behaviour and personal and family relationships.

An "aware" and "sensitive" teacher may reduce, alter, or eliminate content in the curriculum. The writers of guidelines and of the general articles differ in their attitudes to this. The former seem to believe that the alterations and omissions will be carried out for the benefit and comfort of the child and the community, while some of the latter believe that the alterations and deletions may reflect the teachers' needs. An article quoting a Russian educator, for example, referred to the problem of "shyness" among teachers about certain topics.

It is not surprising then that the second most frequently mentioned characteristic is "comfort". This is consistently specified when the education is related to sex. Teacher comfort is also considered important for more subtle reasons. It is generally accepted as a psychological fact that a teacher's discomfort in the area of interpersonal relationships may colour his/her presentation of course content. In addition non-verbal expressions of such discomfort may provide the students with unsettling and "double" messages.

The Tenth Council of Europe's Teachers' Seminar on Education for Parenthood and Family Responsibilities (Cowley) expresses its concern in the following statement:

> We should like to draw attention to our concern about the dangers of handling vital, personal questions in the affective area and the possibility of creating even greater insecurity in our own pupils, unless the teacher has been well trained to bring healing to sensitive areas touched upon.

Several of the most highly developed and integrated curriculum guidelines (e.g., those of Finland and Sweden) and several position papers (e.g., from New Zealand and Russia) mention a climate of mutual trust as a necessary element in the achieving of open discussion and the effecting of changes in attitude. The ability of a teacher to trust him/herself and the students is specified as an important teacher characteristic.

Very few sources mention the selection of teachers on the basis of special training. Information obtained from Russia describes non-exam seminars for all teachers to improve their communication skills. Those who will be teaching Ethics and Psychology of Family Life specialize during their initial professional training, learning to provide "individual and group consultations" and to help parents with childrearing problems of an educational as well as a personal and social nature.

In summary, responses to the question about teacher selection referred almost uniformly to the criteria of training and interest, rather than to personal characteristics. There is no research in the general literature to shed light on the possible effects of teacher characteristics on student course selection or on course presentation, let alone the impact of those characteristics on students' attitude formation and/or change. The need for such research is echoed in the report of the Tenth Council of Europe's teachers' seminar: "We urgently ask for on-going research both into the skills involved in this type of work, and into its effectiveness in meeting the aims for which we think it is designated."

The consideration of the teacher as a dependent variable in the achievement of the goals of FLE has not been given its due weight as a criterion for teacher selection.

Teacher Support

Material Resources

There appears to be an abundance of FLE support materials available in English and, judging by comments received about the preparation of curriculum materials by countries such as Japan, some materials that would be worth having translated. There are long lists of print, audio-visuals, and some kits listed in curriculum guidelines. While most of these have been produced in the United States, some have shown themselves to be tranferable to the Maoris in Australia and the Choctaw Indians in the United States. A quick scan of the titles suggests that attention has been paid to the "sensitive" aspects of content, but a special investigation would be required to determine whether and to what extent certain cultural values are embedded in the material.

Most salient among the support materials are the curriculum guides and outlines provided by boards of education to teachers. The global impression one gets from scanning them is that there is a great deal of shared basic structure and content around the world. The curricula of California, New Jersey, Louisiana, New Zealand, Sweden, and Finland were the most impressive among those received.

Teachers can choose from materials of varying degrees of specificity, which can be presented at various stages of a child's development. Sweden's curricula contain long and detailed analyses of the values involved, of issues affecting community response, and so on. The structure and content of the curricula from Finland show evidence of the incorporation of much psychological material. The effects of course content and manner of presentation on the students' motivation are discussed and suggestions for course evaluation are provided. Most of the curricula prepared on a smaller regional basis do not specify the basic criteria employed by the curriculum committees for the selection and inclusion of materials; thus, those teachers who limit themselves to such materials do not appear to have any formal guidelines for making selections from among the support materials in the field.

The levels of sophistication expected from teachers vary widely. Many materials rely on teachers' knowledge of their students

and their general "sensitivity" to guide their responses to the issues raised in the classroom by the content. One state's curriculum guideline lists frequently occurring difficult questions that students pose and suggests appropriate responses. For many of the FLE units subsumed as a minor part of a home economics program, it appears that outlines are so specific that teachers could cover the ground by keeping a few steps ahead of their students. This seems appropriate where the course is of a survey nature and the goal seems to be to bring certain topics to the students' attention.

In-service Training

This varies widely. Most typical is the provision of periodic workshops on relevant topics. The respondents did not specify whether attendance at them is required or recognized. One board's reply was to the effect that the regional universities offer related courses for upgrading, the implication being that those who wanted to further their training could do it on their own time. Another respondent wrote "Teachers have everything they really need."

On the other extreme, New Zealand provides regular courses and workshops. When it was decided to adopt the Education for Parenthood program from the United States, an expert from that program was brought over to provide intensive training to a large core of FLE teachers, who were then required to train others in the field.

The impression left after perusing the curriculum guides and outlines is that those publications are expected to provide references to sufficient background material and sufficient direction to enable teachers to continue on their own. That is, teacher development is implicitly expected to result from the use of those guidelines. There is little material in most guidelines to suggest the societal changes and philosophic and psychological considerations that influenced the educators who designed and/or revised the courses.

Human Resources

From the course outlines and curriculum guidelines, it seems that teachers are expected to draw on the community for human resources. In California FLE teachers are encouraged to call on families and individuals in the community to present themselves before classes as examples of single-parent families, intact families, families with older parents, and so on. Nothing is said about how such volunteers are to be found on any regular basis.

Community support also comes from social agencies, public health nurses, community relations and youth departments of local police forces, and staff of agencies such as rape crisis centres, shelters for abused women and children, and so on. Professionals from all the helping professions are expected to provide special speakers who each present one very specific segment of the course content.

There are several difficulties inherent in these kinds of support. Some skilled professionals are not skilled teachers for younger students, and a willingness to participate in classroom programs does not guarantee an ability to communicate effectively. Another practical difficulty is the limitation automatically placed on the school's access to such participation when it is based on the professionals' donating their own time.

Various social agencies provide professional time to FLE classes, but this is directly dependent on economic conditions. For example, one large Metropolitan Toronto agency has cut down severely on the time available from its social workers for indirect service such as that spent in the schools' FLE programs. By contrast, another Toronto agency is devoting more of its professional energies to supporting teachers, by offering professional time specifically for teacher development as well as for class presentations. Some of this support is provided by volunteers trained by the agency.

In short, the teacher is expected to draw from sources of supply that are frequently shifting. The entire literature contains many references to the need to stimulate and sustain community involvement. In effect, schools whose personnel put a high value on

FLE, and those teachers who teach the course content, are finding that the active promotion of the importance of FLE is required.

One major thrust in more intensive programs that cover a longer time span is the provision to students of direct experience with younger children. The settings are usually day-care centres or drop-in centres, either in the community or in a local school. Sometimes a nearby nursery school is used. In England, for example, drop-in centres in shopping areas are included in the program, and in Sweden, Germany, and Russia day-care centres attached to factories are involved.

In some programs, the students visit these centres once or several times to observe specific aspects of behaviour. In other programs, the students are actively involved on a regular basis over the entire school year with the children. The day-care staff supervises the students, and the teacher helps to integrate their experiences in class discussions. The literature indicates an increasing enthusiasm for students' regular involvement with young children, with a growing conviction that the experience benefits all the children.

While such outside programs are important to the effectiveness of FLE, they may not be as vital as the climate of support within the profession itself. Some ministries are required by law to make FLE available within their jurisdictions. Most frequently, however, the decision to offer such courses is made by the principal of each school, if there are teachers willing to teach those topics. Since the principal is most often the person who must answer any objections to such courses, his/her committed support is crucial. If he/she regards FLE as a potential trouble, the program may be omitted, diluted, or downgraded.

Teachers help determine educational priorities by their advice to students. There were numerous comments made during interviews that students are told that FLE subjects are unrelated to academic or career achievement. Such a climate among fellow teachers

decreases the enthusiasm, commitment, and credibility of the teacher who is teaching FLE subjects.

Professional colleagues contribute to program development, providing input at several stages. All curriculum guidelines indicate that contributions were made at these stages by a committee of specialists, that is, teachers whose specialization is FLE or home economics, as well as teachers of those subjects areas under which various FLE topics are subsumed. Special consultants are routinely included for the more extensive programs.

Parent and Community Involvement

As has been discussed earlier, community support is provided by other professions. The provision of FLE programs is, however, subject to attack by vocal groups and individuals, and teachers are aware that such opposition has political repercussions. There are many references in the literature to the importance of eliciting early and continued community support for programs. In many places detailed curriculum outlines must be sent to the students' homes at the beginning of each academic year, so that the teachers know that their teaching is open to close public scrutiny. The climate of support in which the teachers function is therefore a vital issue in the field.

A number of statements indicated that the respondents' programs were a direct result of a concerned teacher stimulating interest in the community. Interestingly, there is no mention of parents' triggering a demand for FLE, although there are reports that, when questioned about their educational needs in retrospect, parents noted a lack of parenting education. Perhaps parents have tended to be somewhat overwhelmed by the pressures of our rapidly changing societies and to respond to initiatives from educators, rather than to seek to instigate such initiatives. There are several mentions of home-and-school representatives on committees, but none are mentioned as providing the impetus for the provision of FLE in the schools.

The most frequent model of community input involves a curriculum committee that includes teachers, school administrators, parents and guardians, physicians and other members of the helping professions, members of the clergy, other prominent members of the community, and, in some instances, students. In a number of countries and American states, the assembly and maintenance of such a committee is mandatory.

Direct parent involvement has been minimal, and many reasons have been given to account for this. One reason is a varied cultural and ethnic mix in the community, which includes not only parents whose views on the role of the school in teaching FLE might contradict majority views, but also parents whose background has developed in them

a distrust of school authority. Some parents regard the schools' contribution and their parental contribution as parallel but very separate.

Russian material on the close co-operation between parents and schools is noteworthy. All teachers are expected to be in direct and frequent contact with parents and to take some responsibility for counselling parents about both school and home guidance. The teacher is to be regarded as an active partner and guide in childrearing and is trained to function as such. Such contacts provide direct feedback for school programs.

The community provides input at the continuation, support, and evaluation of FLE programs. As mentioned in the preceding section, the continuation of programs is assisted by community input into the educational process itself. As various agencies become aware of and concerned about social trends, they provide information that assists teachers in adapting courses to the specific needs of community groups. In a number of countries and American states, curriculum committees must by law evaluate and revise their programs at stated intervals.

Economics affects this procedure considerably. One populous American state has run out of copies of their guidelines, and the respondent from that state noted that no revision is planned for at least five years, for budgetary reasons. By contrast, a few countries provide their foreign embassies with position papers on various educational topics in order to test world opinion and to feed back responses to their program designers. Sweden distributes such exploratory discussion material in English. A Russian article in the newspaper Trud (Ermolaeva) ended with the statement that the government was interested in responses from other countries about its plans for compulsory sex education. Thus, feedback in FLE is being sought at an international level.

The New Jersey guidelines set forth the following reasons for continuing community involvement:

- to acknowledge the community's distinctive differences;

- to make appropriate use of available community resources and expertise
- to seek the community's views and needs in order to avoid misunderstanding and frustration;
- to provide a vehicle for communicating with the community;
- to guarantee that parental/community concerns are recognized;
- to seek contributions to the development of the local family life education curriculum.

Sometimes teachers play multiple roles. One administrator-correspondent stated that since teachers are residents of their community, know it well, and have a long-term stake in it, and since they are usually parents, they can speak on behalf of the profession, the community, and parents. There are some statements in several articles in the literature about the home and the school being equal partners, but one wonders if, in some jurisdictions, one party is perhaps considered more equal than the others when it comes to the degree of input from the community.

There are a number of channels that provide feedback at the local level on the impact and the acceptability of courses and programs. The universal mode of receiving such feedback is through the students' performance and responses during and after the courses. These may take the form of course evaluations, personal comments to teachers, and exam results. This will be discussed further under parenting education research. Parent nights and questionnaires sent to the homes provide channels for parental response. As has been noted, a number of educational centres send material on course content to the homes of students at the beginning of each year; many of these centres also send evaluation questionnaires to parents at the end of the year as well.

There is no statement in the literature, nor among the other sources of data, to the effect that parental or community pressures caused a program to be withdrawn. A case presentation of a program that failed would be of considerable interest to the field. Many respondents commented that "of course there was some" opposition expressed by "a vocal minority". However, the impression conveyed to

the listener is that while such opposition may be loud, it can be withstood. The experience of the Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board indicates the long-term effectiveness of openness and personal (or institution) conviction in outlasting such opposition. A Catholic lay group objected to the provision of FLE by the Catholic separate schools in Ontario because they questioned the appropriateness of such education in a religious context. The opposition was eventually dropped.

In 1972, the National Centre for Child Advocacy, Children's Bureau, Office of Child Development, in co-operation with the Office of Education and the National Institute of Mental Health, launched a nationwide program called Education for Parenthood. The major purposes of the program were to provide teenagers with the opportunities to develop more positive attitudes about children and parenting; to improve their self-awareness and self-understanding; and to increase their knowledge and skills along the following dimensions:

- the course of child development
- the social, medical and emotional needs of children
- the family's role in child development and socialization
- the important factors in prenatal and early postnatal care
- child care career possibilities and requirements

(Morris 1977)

One major effort to obtain community support through the participation of accepted community groups involved the above-mentioned program. This project enlisted a number of widely respected youth organizations to test and adapt its original material in non-school settings. Each organization adjusted the material to suit its own goals and membership. No community opposition is mentioned in any of the evaluations.

One article (Alexander) stated that community opposition had been effective in impeding program development; this was an inference based on the belief that a lowered degree of interest in family life programs among legislators resulted from opposition. From the time the

American federal government advocated regional program development (1977) to the time legislators brought such programs up in the state bodies (1981), enthusiasm had waned. No supportive evidence is mentioned to indicate any public opposition.

The guidelines, which include any length of preamble on implementation, stress the positive approach: the continuing provision of detailed information about programs, both before and during presentation. The New Jersey guideline makes the point that public awareness and acceptance are closely related to the success of any endeavour in FLE. The literature reflects the conviction of those involved in designing and implementing programs that acceptance is contingent on public awareness of course content and program goals.

Education in Non-School Settings

The conclusion derived from the literature is that community agencies contribute significantly to the provision of FLE to young people, but tend to do so as part of their provision of services to parents. Their efforts are often directed towards providing parents with the concepts and knowledge that they need for improved parenting. The assumption is implicit that parents will develop their skills through interactions with their own children.

There are many references in the literature to public and private agencies that provide a variety of direct services to the community. A familiar example of one such agency which provides a range of services in support of families is the children's aid societies. Their services include programs on parenting skills, which are offered to populations containing those parents who are at high risk of becoming child abusers and/or to those who are known to be abusive. Such programs form part of a network of supportive services within many communities.

Sweden and Russia provide examples of parenting programs for teenagers outside of the formal school system. Sweden has its "folk schools", which provide courses to meet the needs of young people who have completed their formal academic education; course outlines vary according to the expressed needs of each group. In Russia, the Ministry of Culture and Education finances a general program called "Knowledge", in which FLE is one of the areas of concentration. The respondents from both these countries describe such classes as "well received".

Ontario community colleges provide some FLE courses as part of their early childhood education and child care programs. The content relevant to this study is given in the second year of these courses, when the students are about nineteen years old. Most of the students are female. Since the courses are given in the context of career training, the values component and the attitude formation and personality development aspects of FLE must constitute relatively minor parts of the students' education.

The Salvation Army in Canada provides training for teenage single pregnant girls and mothers in a number of cities throughout the country. Classes are held in residential centres for delinquent girls, and local provincial guidelines are followed. Discussion groups are set up on topics of interest to the girls; such topics generally revolve around prenatal and infant care, which are of imminent importance. Depending on the interest of the leader, girls from the surrounding community may also be included. There are also therapeutic groups for disturbed girls in which FLE forms a significant part of the therapeutic program. Here the approach is to effect a change in lifestyle through a change in attitude.

Teenagers may also participate in programs offered to the general community. At Ryerson in Toronto, the Workers Educational Association runs programs for parents; teenage mothers participate in the formal and practical aspects of these courses using the day-care centre at the college. In addition, religious organizations provide premarital courses to prepare young people for family life, as well as family-enrichment courses. The advantage of such programs are that they are available when the participants perceive the need; thus, the motivation of those involved is generally high. As well, these programs allow teenage parents to meet with older parents on a common ground, thus providing them with a supportive network.

Family life centres (such as the one in Markham, Ontario) and networks of family service associations, which provide courses for groups and guidance for families with problems, also allow teenagers to meet with older parents. The frequency and extent of such services depend, however, on budgetary considerations. There is so much pressure for remedial, problem-oriented services that preventive education is the first service to be cut. British Columbia's recent budget cutbacks, for example, have affected supportive and preventive services drastically in that province. While most communities are struggling to do their share in the upbringing of young people, they are under urgent pressure to serve those with the most severe problems first.

The respondents provided little information about non-governmental education, other than to note, as several did, that social agencies are available.

There are a number of references in the general literature to specific centres at which innovative approaches have been tried. The provision of apprenticeship in the form of direct experience with young children is an innovation that has stirred the interest of many, especially if the parents of the children who attend also participate.

Judging by the literature surveyed for this study, the most impressive community outreach was made as part of the Exploring Childhood, Preparation for Parenthood program developed in the United States. This program, (described elsewhere in detail) was designed to be a prototype, and to provide a range and variety of content so that schools and community agencies could adapt any or all parts of the program to suit their own educational purposes. The Boys Clubs of America set up a variety of life-skills and parenthood discussion groups, with topics ranging over much of the FLE general area. The national 4-H clubs set up programs in four areas of the country which covered child development, family life, and parenting topics with teenage groups (predominantly female). In the Maryland unit, teens were trained to baby-sit retarded children and were recruited as volunteer day-care staff.

The Girl Scouts of America encourages the incorporation of parent education at the council level and has produced a child-development guide and a family-living guide. It also has a program to train teens as sitters for the handicapped.

The National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centres, for the Salvation Army (U.S.A.), and the Save the Children Federation all participated in adapting the Preparation for Parenthood programs for their membership, with the teenagers participating in that adaptation. The last organization even arranged for teenagers to visit the homes of local families and to gain more direct experience with younger children.

It is significant that the majority of the young people who participated in these programs came from two-parent families, with the exception of those programs provided by the Neighborhood Centres, at which just under half did so. It is also significant that, except in the programs run by the Boy Scouts and the Salvation Army, most of the participants were girls. There is a self-selection process at work in these programs, and the principles are the same as those operating in school programs.

There are references from Europe and other countries that describe community efforts. Many of these appear to be in the nature of demonstration projects, and, if so, they are most vulnerable to economic conditions. A special survey would be required to determine whether such programs are still functioning. In the United States, several large private organizations operating on behalf of families have been dissolved.

The question that might be raised: Why not allow community services and volunteer agencies to carry the main thrust of providing FLE? As has been stressed in several other contexts, FLE delivered at point of need is vital, but not sufficient. The recent experience of local organizations is noteworthy. As the number of working mothers and the complexity of life both increase, fewer parents are willing or able to commit themselves to a major investment of time or energy. While the need for parenting education may be salient for those who are parents, or about to become parents, their inner emotional resources are often insufficient to allow them to undertake such education. Parents, whether below the age of twenty or not, may realize that they need parenting education at that point, but they wish then that they already had it. This was the finding of one study, and it points to the conclusion that, regardless of how well community agencies are coping with their part in providing FLE, the role of the schools is still crucial.

New Directions in the Field

The provision of apprenticeship training for students in the form of close, direct, and continued interaction with younger children is the most conspicuous direction the field is taking. Some schools have nursery-school programs on the premises, with the preschool program run either in conjunction with the FLE program or independently. Some students apprentice in day-care or drop-in programs, as described in an earlier section. Such programs provide students with the personal interaction and role modelling that is lacking in so many homes. The smaller numbers of children in families and the greater age differences among them have caused many of today's children to miss the opportunity of watching young children grow and of watching how parents handle the young. The concept of developmental stages becomes real when students have continued contact with the same children over a significant period of time. As well, reports from those countries that place a high value on the uniqueness of the individual point out that such direct experience reinforces the concept of uniqueness.

For educational, as well as for economic, reasons, the apprenticeship aspect of FLE is gaining in frequency and importance. An increasing number of children are receiving daycare. If parents cannot afford such care, and if such facilities are not provided by employers, then governments are exhorted to provide daycare services for those families in need of such assistance. This puts additional strain on existing services, especially in times of economic recession. Costs of such care can be shared between community and social services, and education, since the students who participate in programs do so as part of their FLE courses.

A number of individual experimental programs have already been described. Two additional programs are so original that they were each mentioned only once in the data. The first is a high school program in which recent drop-outs, out-of-school adolescents, and adults are included in FLE credit classes with regular students. Many non-regular students are returning for academic upgrading. Some of them are single mothers, who are provided with baby-sitting services during the classes. Since these classes are given for credit, they attract highly motivated people.

One of the most original programs is in Hawaii, where an upgrading program for unemployed men and women is held in several schools. Many of these are the parents of children in the schools. In cases where the latter are old enough to take part in FLE classes, parents and children take these courses together. In the segment on sex education, the parents and children hear the same presentations; the children then address their questions to their own parents. According to the letter describing this program, the social skills, self-esteem, and employability of these parents have been significantly improved.

In order to make the content of home economics courses appear more directly related to students' long term vocational goals, some programs have changed their title to "Vocational Home Economics". This change is intended to attract more of those students who perform at a higher level academically than has been the case, and also those whose career goals include extended training, for example, for various professions. Such students often encounter timetable problems, which prevent them from taking the FLE courses. The emphasis on future professional considerations may, however, prove to be a mixed blessing. The literature and the respondents both express the belief that parenting and family life are a vocation, a life calling. Current worldwide economic fluctuations have brought a resurgence of concern with education as job training, with the result that parenting, nurturing, and socializing the young are becoming more of a job definition than a part of the individual's life vocation. There is even a National Society for Optional Parenting in several countries. The implications of this trend are unsettling.

A more positive occurrence is the co-operation between schools and community agencies. In Toronto, for example, one agency provides trained personnel who will, upon invitation, assist FLE teachers in public or separate schools with programming and with professional development.

The most significant direction, however, in this writer's opinion, is the direction of the Council of Europe's Department of Culture and Education. It is broadening the entire base of this

educational enterprise by moving beyond family life education to the social education of adolescents. Rather than focusing on education for the remediation of social problems, the department's approach reorganizes the field in terms of personal and interpersonal development, with the fundamental value of responsibility and the family placed within the perspective of self in society. In a sense, the focus changes from the study of the needs of others to the study of self and others and comes closer to the most salient concerns of adolescence. Psychologically, this should prove more meaningful and motivating to adolescents than does the present focus.

With this new focus, education for and about family life can be provided separately and need not undertake to inculcate attitudes, provide information, discuss goals and values, and describe parenting techniques all within one or two courses. The wide-spectrum approach that has characterized the whole field of endeavour can be refocused, and the programs in family life and parenting tightened up. Education for the personal and social development of students can constitute one major thrust in the schools' contribution to the rearing of children. Preparation for parenthood and family life can constitute a parallel, concurrent thrust. Thus, the definition of the twin fields will be clearer, and it will be easier to incorporate them in programs.

Parenting-Education Research — Past and Future

Family life education is viewed throughout the world as a way of preventing some of our major social problems. One might expect the research findings to document the effects of such education on the incidence of some of these problems. However, no such direct evidence appears in the literature.

There is only one experiment that comes close to following the expected model. Carried out in Sweden, it compared the number of illegitimate births in two groups of high-risk teenage girls. One group was provided with sex education, including the discussion of responsible childbearing, while the control group had only been involved in general group discussions. There was no significant difference in the number of pregnancies between the two groups five years later.

This can be interpreted as an indication that the course was not effective in achieving its intended goal—the reduction or elimination of illegitimate births. At the very least, the result runs counter to the fear expressed by some groups that knowledge about contraception will increase promiscuity and pregnancies. Both the control and the experimental groups were exposed to a similar social environment, and this may have had a confounding effect on the results.

The explanation for the lack of direct cause-and-effect research into the effects of FLE is embedded in the state of the field itself. Education that provides knowledge about child development, intrafamilial relations, and techniques for child discipline and guidance is a necessary but not sufficient condition to effect changes in behaviour. The very recognition of this fact led parenthood educators to extend their efforts to develop in their students those skills, attitudes, and personality characteristics that support and facilitate the effective use of parenting skills.

There is implicit recognition in the field that conceptual and skill knowledge will only be applied when certain other variables are operating. That is the reason why what started out as education

for rearing families, which is the direct focus of parenting education, expanded to include education for all of life.

Most of the experiments in the field are demonstrations of feasibility, and they involve much creativity. It has been demonstrated that parents and children can and will take courses together; that both students and young children benefit from close and continued supervised contact (in such settings as daycare centres, for example), and that FLE can benefit delinquent and disturbed girls (Salvation Army programs). Parenting education can also be provided by correspondence (for example, in New Zealand), to pregnant girls and single mothers who did not attend regular classes, and to girls who cannot attend school for reasons of inaccessibility.

Some of the research can best be described as "consumer studies". Students and parents are polled about their subjective responses to courses and programs. This is done through the use of questionnaires, course evaluations, and the amassing of considerable anecdotal evidence. Teacher satisfaction with programs and with learner outcomes is reported everywhere as highly positive. The only negative responses from teachers are related to their feelings that pre- and in-service training are insufficient and that the community has inadequate regard for the field.

Most of the within-school studies reported in the curriculum outlines and by the respondents involve internal validation. This is typically done by teachers on the bases of students' written work, contribution to class discussions, and examination results. Teachers also rate students on their comprehension of basic concepts and attitudinal changes. There is no evidence that the results of such studies are made available to others in the field.

The California guidelines describe one approach to testing student ability to generalize from course content to life situations. A sample situation involving a child and a parent is described. A correct response requires that the student know some important details about child development, recognize that such facts need to be taken

into account in the adult's response, and suggest an appropriate adult response.

Another form of internal validation involves the testing of predetermined learner goals. The portion of the Sexual Health and Responsibility Program entitled Some Essential Learner Outcomes (SELO) from Minnesota takes this approach. The comprehensiveness and appropriateness of specific desired learner outcomes is tested by students' responses to hypothetical life situations. The student is considered to be able to generalize from the course when he/she can specify the kinds of knowledge that the central figure requires in each kind of situation and the skills required to make a responsible decision. Such studies at least allow it to be said that the students learned enough from the courses to enable them to generalize to life situations on an intellectual level. Comparable studies could be carried out in a number of settings over a number of years to provide a firmer basis for the internal validation of programs than has been done to date.

The kind of research that can be done, and is not being done, according to the data obtained, is the testing of the "pedagogic" approach, which was defined earlier. What does the student learn about him/herself? For example, how does learning about the stages in children's emotional development affect the student's attitudes towards his/her own emotionality? When students understand how adults apply the principles of non-punitive discipline to children, does this understanding help them to apply self-discipline in situations where they are required to consider the consequences of their own actions?

There is no indication in the data surveyed that anyone has observed systematically what does occur in FLE classrooms. Teachers must be basing their expressed satisfaction with outcomes on observable events and attitudes, and these should be made explicit. Meaningful research at this point in the development of the field should concentrate on the relationships between programs and those variables in individual students that determine the effects of education on later behaviour. In addition to knowledge, variables include identifiable basic attitudes, which can be inferred from observations of the

students and from estimates of how they generalize and transfer concepts. Equally important, the variables in individual teachers, which are so stressed in the literature, should be observed and evaluated. Finally, classroom interaction processes need to be observed and delineated.

These are the immediate, necessary, and practical directions for research in this field.

Conclusions

There is universal agreement that families need help in rearing their children and preparing them for life, because, as the letter requesting information about programs stated (Appendix C), the task in this time of changing family constellations and in a changing society is too complex and too massive for most parents to fulfil. There are two main aspects to the task. The first is the raising of responsible young people who have clear and desirable values, who are able to relate maturely and closely to others, and who value family life as a major part of a fulfilling life. The second is the provision to these young people of the knowledge and skills that they will require to undertake and maintain a family and to carry out the role of caring for their children and rearing them with the same values and goals that they themselves have.

The term parenting education should apply only to the knowledge and skills required for good parenting and should not be stretched to encompass all of the characteristics and values found in effective parents. Parenting education is a conceptually separate and distinct component of the overall educational enterprise covered by the general terms family life education, education for life, and so on.

The knowledge and skills developed through parenting education are necessary for good parenting but are not sufficient. There are certain personality attributes—specific attitudes and values—that are generally recognized as vital to effective childrearing. In effect, education is expected, implicitly if not explicitly, to share in the development of these personality characteristics, attitudes, and values in children. This goes beyond parenting education to life education. Schools, then, are being asked to share in the character development of students. Education is being called on throughout the world, to act as an equal partner in the enterprise of rearing children.

Although parenting education is conceptually separate from FLE, it is not, however, functionally separate. It takes certain kinds of people to make the commitment to rearing a family and to value the

role and the process. Many of the definitions found in the literature and curricula describe the qualities required: a strong sense of self-worth, the abilities to relate intimately and to communicate effectively, a clear set of values that includes responsibility for self and others. People with these characteristics are the ones best able to effectively apply the knowledge and the skills taught under parenting education. Any education that helps to produce such people contributes to their effectiveness, and thus contributes to good parenting, which is one of our society's goals.

If education is to be a full partner in childrearing, then the best programs are those that carry through the entire educational enterprise, from the earliest years to the end of children's formal education, since education can make a significant contribution at every age level. Thus the two major aspects of the educational task outlined previously can be fulfilled.

There are excellent programs and excellent curricula available as models. There are also excellent supportive materials. The process of selection from among these will depend in part on how much of the childrearing enterprise the curriculum planners can undertake. Obviously a course which extends over thirty class periods can be expected to contribute far less to childrearing than a program which extends over thirteen years.

Despite the existence of well-thought-out programs, the outreach of these programs is a major concern: the most insightful and creative curricula cannot influence students who do not take those courses. The move towards "vocational" home economics seeks to increase the status of the courses and to attract those who plan to train for certain helping professions, but the risk here is that parenting skills will be put into a professional context. The social problems cited in all of the appeals for parenting education are not the only indicators of deep social malaise. Teachers generally emphasize course selection that is geared towards professional and technical development. Economic uncertainty has led many concerned adults to recommend those subjects that appear to lead directly to vocational goals and to stress them to the exclusion of many others.

Community resources vary in availability, since they are most vulnerable to economic factors. Such resources are largely oriented towards the provision of remedial, problem-centred services for special groups. There is considerable overlap in the kinds of educational services offered, but since these agencies locate their "students" according to the educational needs that their personnel can fulfil, and since these students are largely self-selected, there is little overlap in clientele. Such programs provide those who did not receive parenting education or who were not educationally "ready" for it earlier with a second chance to obtain such education. They do not, however, substitute for formal and extensive parenting education within the age range considered here.

There is no public protest resulting from the disappointment and unhappiness that maybe found among many of those who have followed the road to external success. In many cases these people lack the ability to relate directly to others, to communicate with other members of their families. They lack the skills to resolve interpersonal conflicts. In other words, their parenting skills as well as their personal life skills are deficient. Their inability to parent effectively is then passed on to the next generation. Their children tend to bypass parenting education and to focus, as did their parents, on courses leading to similar external success. Up to the present, the majority of FLE students have been girls whose academic achievement goals are low.

The best programs are those that begin when schooling begins, when attitudes and beliefs are inculcated, when the personal foundation is being established. Courses given at the elementary level provide some life education for boys and girls equally and, because they are compulsory, reach all children. When there is careful sequencing throughout the intermediate and senior school levels, then the material reaches students when they are intellectually and socially ready for it and in time to help them cope with the developmental pressures of the next stage in life. (There is increasing convergence of opinion as to the ages and levels at which various subtopics are appropriate and effective.) Perhaps such sequencing and integration of material are more important than considerations of whether the course content is

embedded in other subject areas or presented as a subject in its own right.

Teacher suppport varies far more than do programs. It is probably fair to say that the amount and quality of in-service training for FLE depend on the importance attached to the field as much as to economic considerations. The greatest lack, in this writer's opinion, is sufficient understanding and support from others in the profession.

Concern about teacher selection and pretraining varies widely. According to information obtained from respondents in letters and phone interviews, these topics are not widely considered to be issues at this time. There are, however, a number of concerns, expressed in the literature and in the guidelines of several of the most highly developed programs, about suitable selection and pretraining. This could be one direction for investigative research.

There is little evidence of appropriate research in the general area of family and life preparation for young people. The major existing work centres around the development and use of one of the best programs and its adaptability by community organizations for use with a wide variety of adolescents. The hope of many advocates of parenting education is that one or more courses will change the behaviour of adolescents sufficiently so that their "worrisome behaviour", which is the focus of adult concern in the literature, will diminish.

Education should not be expected, nor expect, to provide an immediate cure for social ills by the application of any one or any number of specific courses. The educative and re-educative processes are more intricate than to permit such quick intervention. Evaluative studies have been almost entirely retrospective, and here the evidence is impressive. Students report increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and insight into the behaviour of children, of their families, and of themselves. Young people questioned shortly after their schooling ended reported an awareness and concern about insufficient interpersonal, decision-making, and parenting skills.

The enthusiasm expressed by so many of the respondents that this survey was in progress, as an indication of shared interest in the subject, is unmistakable. There were no nay-sayers to parenting education. The urgency that is characteristic of so many of the articles, the general literature, and the various social agencies contacted leads to only one conclusion. Parenting education has a contribution to make, as part of preparation for life, and the more widely such education is provided, the more impact it will have.

The evidence obtained for this project indicates that different areas and jurisdictions are at different stages in their realization of the following conclusions:

1. Parenting education is one major segment of a long-term enterprise, which is the preparation of the young for life.
2. There are certain values that need to be made explicit in this educational process, so that the schools can share with parents and with community institutions in the inculcation of these values.
3. The educational process requires the integration of what is taught from the first to the last year of formal schooling.
4. The educational system can be a full partner, and even at times a leader, in the preparation of the young for lives as individuals, as family members, and as parents.

Appendix A: Questions Addressed by This Study

1. How is parenting education defined in the literature?

2. What is happening around the world in parenting education?

3. What is the nature of such education?

4. Does the literature suggest a most suitable age or grade level for it to take place?

5. If at grade levels, at which grade levels does parenting education take place?

6. Where family life and/or parenting courses are offered, are they optional or mandatory, and are they given co-educationally, to separate sex groups, or to females only?

7. Are there particular provisions in parenting eduation for and about exceptional children?

8. What does the literature say about the need for parenting courses?

9. What is seen to be the role of the school in meeting that need?

10. What research if any has been done to determine that need?

11. What is the perceived success of such courses?

12. Has any formal evaluation been done? If so, what were the results of the evaluation methodology?

13. What instructor support is given to teachers of parenting education programming?

14. What are the criteria for the selection of teachers for parenting education?

Appendix B: Descriptors

First pass:

- Parent
- Parenthood
- Parenting Preparation for parenthood
- Responsible parenting
- Family
- Family life
- Child bearing
- Child care
- Child development
- Child health
- Child rearing
- Adolescent
- Upbringing

Second pass: all the above, in conjunction with:

- Curricula
- Curricula development
- Education
- Evaluation
- Instructional materials
- Programs
- Teaching guides

Third pass:

- Family living
- Family planning
- Family relationships
- Home economics
- Homemakeing
- Life education
- Life skills
- Parent role
- Pedagogy

Appendix C: Letter Sent to Solicit Information

The Ministry of Education of the Province of Ontario has commissioned me to research the status of Parenthood Education, and Family Studies given in educational institutions and community organizations throughout the world, for children up to the age of 19.

Traditionally the skills needed for becoming responsible and effective parents were learned in the home from the family. Religious and community organizations helped to provide further training in the values and goals involved in bringing up children. Now, the traditional family structures are undergoing major changes in many countries throughout the world.

Children can no longer learn through direct experience in extended families, and desirable role models are often lacking in broken homes. As a result of these changes, families can no longer be counted on to the same degree as in the past to provide children with the knowledge they will need when they reach maturity, to raise a family.

The Province of Ontario has been actively involved in improving its existing Family Studies program, and would welcome input from other countries on both theoretical and practical issues. The list of questions below details the kind of information we are seeking. In particular, any publications, reports, discussion papers, working documents, etc. you might have relevant to such courses in Parenthood would be most helpful. The general area covered includes such headings as child-rearing, child development, upbringing child care, child health and welfare.

Since the entire search must be conducted and the results submitted by me by September of this year, you will appreciate the need for the least possible delay in response.

1. What is seen to be the role of the schools in providing such education?
2. What is the nature of the Parenthood courses offered in your schools and/or community organizations?
3. At what ages or grade levels does such education take place?
4. Are such courses optional or mandatory, given to mixed or separate sex-groups, or to females only?
5. Are there particular provision in such courses for or about exceptional children, i.e., those with handicaps, deficits, or special characteristics?
6. What research, if any, was done to determine the need for such courses?
7. What is the perceived success of such courses, and how have they been evaluated?
8. What was the community input, if any, into the development of the curricula for Parenthood Education courses?
9. What are the parents' reactions to such courses being taught to their children?
10. What are the criteria for the selection of teachers for Parenthood Education?
11. What kinds of support are given to teachers of such courses?

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours very truly,

Appendix D: Sources of Direct Responses

Countries

Canada
Chile
Denmark
East Germany
England
Finland
Ireland
Israel
Japan
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Poland
Russia
Sweden
United States
West Germany

N = 17

American States

California
Colorado
Hawaii
Illinois
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Main
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Mississippi
New Hampshire
New Jersey
Oklahoma
Rhode Island
South Carolina
Texas
Utah
Virginia
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

N = 22

Canadian provinces: all except Ontario
N = 9

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